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ABSTRACT

A merit pay plan can be successful if it contains unified and agreed upon objectives, integration and expansion of present key tasks, and endorsement and involvement of the entire educational staff. The responsibility of developing appropriate goals rests with the board of education, while the responsibility of documenting voluntary participation in the accomplishment of the established goals is placed with individual educational staff members. Objectives should focus on process (the way things are done) as well as on progress (outcome evaluation). Plan implementation requires the formation of an educational assurance review committee, ideally composed of three board and three staff members, with the school superintendent serving as chairperson. Staff select two or three appropriate administrative, departmental or grade-level, central office, school building, or specific class goals to accomplish each year. Each documented, achieved objective should result in a 1% base salary increase. Such a plan would be on-going, with objective formation/modification occurring every 2 years at maximum. An educational assurance plan could be implemented within an academic year, with final goal setting by September 1, progress review in January, completion of documentation by mid-April, May documentation review by the committee, and compensation checks awarded by mid-June. (NEC)

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A MERIT PAY PLAN FOR THE SMALL, RURAL SCHOOL

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Halstead, Kansas
June, 1985

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A MERIT PAY PLAN FOR THE SMALL, RURAL SCHOOL

The Emphasis of any Merit Pay Plan should be on: action, documentation and organization.

> .....The battlecry for the '80's is the demand for school effectiveness. students and parents are demanding and receiving greater accountability from schools on all levels.[1]
>
> Allen D. McCune*

Everyone agrees that merit pay is an excellent idea. However, practically no one agrees on its practical implementation. Additional financial compensation for meritorious work is a fine concept, but some very practical questions are raised, including:

How do we determine "exceptional work?"

How do we relate these to financial compensation?

Can we keep rivalry and jealousy out of the Plan?

Is it possible? YES!! A merit pay plan can be successful - IF the focus is on:

Unified and agreed upon objectives

Integration and expansion of present key tasks

Uniting the entire educational staff[2]

Involvement of the entire educational staff in the plan.

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[1]David Nelson, "Institutional Leadership and School Effectiveness." KANSAS SCHOOL BOARD JOURNAL, Vol. 23, No. 1, Winter, 1984, p. 12.

[2]For the purpose of the Educational Assurance Plan, "Educational Staff" means all personnel involved in the educational process in the school district. This includes food service, clerical, transportation and maintenance staff. The District may choose to include part-time staff also.

Highlights of the Educational Assurance Plan include:

The responsibility of developing appropriate goals for guiding the entire local school distrcit is placed appropriately with the Board of Education.

> As Ms. Jacque Oakes, President, KSAB quoted in a recent article: "According to Dr. Lu Wolf, Communications Department, Washburn University, The three essentials to being a good board member are cooperation, responsibility and participation."[3]

The responsibility of documenting participation in the accomplishment of these established and agreed-upon goals is placed with the individual educational staff member.

The program is individual and voluntary.

Building administrators are not involved in the merit evaluation of individual staff members, except as supporting advisors and "Master Educators." There is no conflict with the "regular" evaluation and supervision process.

There is no conflict between staff members since all may receive additional compensation for the completion of their objectives.

The focus of this plan is NOT to have educational staff "prove that they are worthy of their paychecks!" Rather, the purpose is to assist the educational staff in: (1) uniting actively behind mutually agreed-upon and locally developed goals and (2) to objectively document these efforts.

> "Education takes place at the local level-not the state-not the federal. Education is the public enterprise closest to the heart of the people."[4]

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[3]Jacque Oakes. "More Beyond Warming Up To Communications." KANSAS SCHOOL BOARD JOURNAL, Vol. 24, No. 1, Winter, 1985, p. 5.

[4]Wanda Reed. "Presidential Potpourri." KANSAS SCHOOL BOARD JOURNAL Vol. 22, No. 4, Fall, 1983, p. 4.

MEANING OF THE NAME-

EDUCATIONAL ASSURANCE PLAN

As its name implys, the Educational Assurance Plan will assist all educational personnel in assuring organized, uniform documentation of successfully meeting the unified, agreed-upon goals established by the local school distrcit. It also means that the participating educational staff will receive additional compensation for their documented efforts. Further the plan provides:

From the Dictionary: (Webster's 7th Edition)

Education - Discipline of mind or character
The science of teaching and learning
- To develop mentally and morally

Assurance
Certainty
Security
Guarantee
Confidence
Self-reliance

Security for patrons and parents of the local school district that the stated goals fo their elected board members are being actively implemented.

Security for the educational staff that they will be compensated for documenting their additional efforts to implement these goals and improve the educational program of the district.

Certainty for the students that the educational staff is working together in an organized, unified effort to enhance their learning experiences.

STEPS TO IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

The goals for the educational staff do not have to be "set in concrete" before the acadmic year begins. They must be mutually agreed upon but education and learning are too dynamic to be completely predicitable months into the future.

1. An Educational Assurance Committee is formed. The Committee should consist of an equal number of board members and educational staff. Three from each group would be a suggestion.

The Superintendent of Schools could serve as Chairperson for the committee. This would be advantageous because of the Superintendent's dual role in the educational process of (1) an employee of the School Board and (2) as a master educator.

Each team could enlist outside consultation especially for the phrasing and wording of the goals, but it is important that

the members of the committee work together as a local team and not enlist "outside, hired negotiators." This is the only way to develop locally-oriented goals and objectives.

Meetings of the committee should be short and businesslike. There is no need for lunches, retreats or similar distractions. Certainly no more than two or three meetings would be needed after the LOCAL Board of Education has set its goals.

There are five types of goals which would be appropriate for implementation of the Educational Assurance Plan:

1. Administrative Goals-(not administration!) which might include such areas as improving general school functioning or internal communication; or goals to improve the academic functioning of the entire school. Examples would include improving communication between faculty and staff, improving student attendance, improving student participation in extra-class activities or improving the academic performance of all students.

2. Departmental or Grade-level Goals- All faculty and staff in a Department or on a grade-level would agree on these goals. Examples would be,(Language Arts) to improve student's spelling abilities during the year -(as with all goals, they would be worded specifically and with time lines for evaluation) or Geography would be added as a fourth-grade component - and all fourth grade faculty would agree on this goal.

3. B.O.E. and Central Office goals - These goals would be designed to improve financing, communication or in other ways improve this level of school functioning.

4. School Building Goals-For this goal also, all faculty and staff who choose to participate in the goals would agree on its implementation. An example would be that all students would be encouraged to follow policies of self-image enhancement and encouragement of peers and adults in the school.

5. Specific Class Objectives- These objectives would be appropriate for a specific class or grade level, such as Mrs. Smith's 4th grade or all 9th graders. An example would be a specific group having problems with basic math skills an objective would be to improve functioning in that basic area.

Special projects could also become valid objectives such as participation in College Bowl Programs, Development of Student Government Programs or similar individually developed programs.

Care should be taken:

A. That the project encompasses an activity which extends throughout the academic year, and,

B. That no stipulation be placed upon winning or placing in any event or competition which would place undue pressures on faculty and students.

It is suggested that the educational staff select no more than two or three objectives on which to work each year. The focus of this plan for merit pay is not to create a burdensome program which would detract from regular educational activities. If an educational professional would select too many goals; time, energy and thought would be diverted from significant educational activities toward the quantified completion of the merit-pay objectives. Ideally, the State Board of Education would supply a list of objectives which would be appropriate and adaptable to local districts. This leadership would supply continuity to goals and objectives and a much-needed central focus, yet leaving final "fine-tuning" up to each local school district.

HOW MANY OBJECTIVES - HOW MUCH MONEY?

The Educational Assurance Plan is designed for one objective for each 1% of base salary. This aids in equalizing opportunities for payments. As mentioned previously, two or three objectives should be the maximum allowed; however, the local school board could make other rules and regulations governing the plan. Again, meeting and documenting these goals should not work to the detriment of other important aspects of the educational process.

WHAT ABOUT NEXT YEAR?

The Educational Assuramce Plan is designed to be an on-going integral part of the educational program custom-designed for each local school district. This is not a one-shot, short-term or "grant writing type of experience." Goals may be repeated or

expanded as determined by the local school board. Two years should be the maximum that a goal should be used as part of the Educational Assurance Plan. Unless otherwise agreed upon, each completed goal should become a part of the regular on-going educational program. The goals must be part of a unified educational effort and they must have the best interest of the educational process at their core. If no goals can be agreed upon for a particular year, then none would be utilized beyond the general goals set forth by the local school board. Students and faculty must not be exploited simply to fulfill goals and objectives and receive extra compensation.

TIME FRAME FOR IMPLEMENTING THE EDUCATIONAL ASSURANCE PLAN

The local Board of Education could begin at any time in developing goals and objectives for their district. Following is a general outline of the implementation of the Educational Assurance Plan:

8/15 - 9/1 Final agreement on appropriate goals and objectives.

1/1 - 1/15 Review of progress toward goals and objectives. Modifications to be made as needed.

4/1 - 4/15 Final check on documentation procedures.

5/15 - 6/1 Documentation notebooks turned in to the committee.

6/15 Compensation checks written to all educational staff for completion of objectives or partial completion.

7/1 - Final disposition made for all goals and objectives.

8/15 - 9/1 Begin the process again.

(Dates are approximate and can easily be altered to fit the established time frams of the individual districts.)

Use of national testing programs such as ACT, SAT, SRA or others provide very useful information for district planning. However, they should not be used to judge merit pay for a single

school or individual teacher. Education is too dynamic for this type of simplistic evaluation and high test scores are not the highest goal for an educational system. These types of goals put undue pressures on both students and faculty. Objectives should be encouraged on process (the way things are done) as well as progress (outcome evaluation). Improvement in process can well improve academic functioning well beyond the current year. The results of the goal and objective can be documented; however, the total effect of successfully completed goals is much more improtant since education is a dynamic, complex interaction of artistic pursuit and scientific foundation.

Dr. Allen McCune

June, 1985

GOAL: _____ No. ____

TYPE OF GOAL: _____

COMPENSATION: __% for successful completion of this goal.

DOCUMENTATION

DATE	ACTIVITY	Evaluation Remarks
____	_____	_____

EVALUATION: Meets the criteria-YES ___ NO___ Evaluator _____

If the evaluation does NOT meet the criteria, suggestions for completion:

_____

_____

Review Deadline: _____ Method of Review: _____

_____ Review Results: _____